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RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 4111
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3254
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2285
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3813
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2366
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1545
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0694
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [CASC](#) [KFLU](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: Jordan: No Further H5N1 Cases Confirmed

REF: Amman 2156 (NOTAL)

11. Summary: As of 1500 local time on March 26, H5N1 avian flu in Jordan has not spread beyond the four cases confirmed in turkeys in northern Jordan reported March 23 (reftel). No human cases have been reported, although rumors persist. The GOJ is stressing transparency with the media. In addition to a cull around the initial site, the GOJ has ordered all backyard flocks of chickens, turkeys and other poultry nationwide to be destroyed by March 30. The GOJ is not yet offering compensation to owners of culled flocks but is considering it. GOJ officials will meet Israeli and Palestinian Authority colleagues for a coordination meeting on March 27. Correction to location reported reftel: the four cases occurred in Kufranjeh, near Ajloun, 15 kilometers east of Israel, 50 kilometers south of Syria. End summary.

6 Kilometer Cull Plus All Backyard Flocks

12. The Ministry of Agriculture has culled all poultry within a six-kilometer radius of the confirmed cases, expanding the original three-kilometer radius. Poultry found more than six and less than ten kilometers from the site will be vaccinated. According to Agriculture Minister Akef Al-Zubi, quoted in the English language Jordan Times on March 26, the GOJ is considering compensation to farmers for their losses. No compensation funds are available at this time.

13. The GOJ announced on March 25 the nationwide enforcement of a March 30 deadline for households and small farmers to destroy backyard flocks of chickens, turkeys and other poultry. The original order applied only to the Jordan Valley, where there are only a few licensed poultry farms.

Comment: The decision of whether or not to cull a specific farm will probably be based on the size of the flock and whether or not the birds are kept inside. If culling is done on this basis, it would affect small farmers and households, but not the professionally managed industrial poultry farms. The GOJ has said repeatedly that so-called backyard flocks are the biggest risk for H5N1. End comment.

Regional Coordination Meeting - March 27

¶4. According to the Arabic language daily Al-Rai on March 24, regional avian influenza officials will meet on Monday, March 27 in Israel to coordinate and discuss cooperation against H5N1. Ministry of Health Secretary General for Technical Affairs Dr. Ali As'ad told USAID FSN that one health-focused meeting between Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian Authority officials is planned for March 27 in Jerusalem with a second, broader meeting on avian flu the same day at the Allenby Bridge, which connects Jordan to the West Bank.

Stressing Transparency with the Media

¶5. The GOJ has been actively disseminating information to and through the media, including joint press conferences by the Ministers of Health and Agriculture on March 24 and March 25. Dr. Ali As'ad stressed to USAID FSN that the GOJ is encouraging open analysis of the situation by journalists through picture-taking and unsupervised interviews. Dr. As'ad said that the GOJ is "on top" of the situation.

Rumors Speculate Israel Sent Virus to Jordan

¶6. Despite strong efforts at public outreach by the GOJ, rumors continue. Rumors include human deaths, specifically of a young girl in Ajloun (denied categorically as a H5N1 case by Minister of Health Saeed Darwazeh); additional cases of avian influenza (usually in a region other than where the rumor started); and deliberate spreading of the virus in Jordan by Israel. An apparently factual transfer of four containers of ground turkey meat from Israel into Jordan is the immediate cause of the rumors involving Israel. Arabic language daily Al-Ghad reported on March 25 that in a poll with roughly 1,500 respondents, 76% felt that the GOJ was insufficiently prepared to manage an avian flu outbreak. Reaction in the Embassy community includes concern for pets and pet birds, how to manage dead birds, awareness of unfounded and inflammatory rumors, and a matter-of-fact "it's finally here" reaction.

Economic Losses Mounting

¶7. The Arabic language daily newspaper Ad-Dustour reported on March 25 that losses from reduced poultry sales are estimated to be roughly \$1.4 million a day. Note: This figure probably reflects sales drops only, and does not include the losses from mandated culling around the country. End note. The Ministry of Agriculture was quoted in the March 26 Jordan Times as saying that the 2,500 farms in the poultry industry create 50,000 jobs and \$840 million in annual revenue. Poultry is the single largest component of Jordan's agricultural sector.

Heavyweight Enters the Fight

¶8. Amman Municipality, home to roughly 40% of Jordan's population, has thrown its considerable weight into the fight. The Municipality opened a hotline on avian flu, and

has closed to the public its three aviaries. Calls are pouring in to the hotline, according to the person who answered the phone when FSN called. The hotline is manned from 0800 to 2200. Some of the staff are fluent English speakers, and all are from the veterinary department and hence knowledgeable on animal issues. The Municipality is preparing a brochure on avian flu that will be distributed to the public.

Embassy Informs Amcits, Staff

19. The Embassy distributed a Department-cleared warden message by e-mail on March 24 to the Amcit community, and has posted the message on the Embassy's website. All Embassy staff received a telephone "SMS" message, also on March 24, repeating the same information used in the warden message. A management notice was emailed to all Embassy staff on March 26 giving a factual summary of the situation, and providing a detailed question-and-answer sheet from www.pandemicflu.gov. Core members of post's Avian Flu Task Force have been in constant communication with each other, regional counterparts and Washington. Embassy management has reviewed avian influenza tripwires and has implemented tripwire guidance.

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